

for the spelling of a Polish word uniformly and precisely indicates its pronunciation.<sup>6</sup> The rhythm and cadence of Polish verse are entirely within the western European tradition, and, indeed, at the very forefront of it in beauty, dignity, and pathos,—as those will attest who have heard such masterpieces of poetic form as the “Sunset” of Mickiewicz or Kraszewski’s “Youth.”

If two Slavic peoples, the Russians and the Poles, are to emerge from these years of suffering with new liberty and hope, we shall perhaps do no injustice if we look to the Poles rather than to their eastern neighbors for the more immediate fecundation of our cultural life. The Russian will have to learn much before he becomes a European, and he may decide, wisely perhaps, to grow in a different direction; the Pole is already one of us, and needs but the opportunity to give of his best. From our national standpoint we may hope that the million Poles in America (Chicago has one of the largest Polish populations in the world) will receive a new encouragement toward the preservation of their inherited language and culture, for it is thus that the American who remembers his foreign birth or descent can best serve our country.

## A WOMAN OF POLAND.

BY MAXIMILIANUS GERMANICUS.

AGAIN I dreamed of Vera. It is a long time since our paths have crossed: and yet for all these years, she, like an accusing spirit, has not ceased to haunt me day and night. Dear Vera, wilt thou pursue me forever? Will those appealing eyes of thine follow

<sup>6</sup> As people are often at a loss to pronounce Polish names, the following suggestions may not be amiss. They give a key for a very rough imitation or rather Anglicization; to acquire the native pronunciation would, of course, be a serious task.

Palatalized consonants are indicated either by an accent-mark over the consonant or by an *i* written after it; for English purposes a consonant plus *y* (as in *yes*) may be substituted for the Polish palatalized consonant, e. g., *miara*, really beginning with palatalized *m*, may be pronounced as *myara*.

Words are accented on next to the last syllable. The vowels are all short but distinct, and have the German or Italian (*continental*) values; *y* is roughly like *i*; *ó* with an accent-mark over it equals *u*; *a* and *e* with a small hook beneath are, respectively, like the vowels of French *bon* and *bain*.

*c* is pronounced *ts*; *cz* and palatalized *c* may be roughly represented by English *ch*; Polish *ch* is somewhat like the German sound in *ach*.

*g* is always “hard” as in English *get*; *j* is the English *y*-sound, as in *yes*; *l* is French or German *l*, the same letter with a cross-line through it may be roughly reproduced by American English *l*.

*rz* is English *z* in *azure*, except after *p* or *t*, where it is English *sh*; *s* is English *s* as in *so*; *sz* and palatalized *s* may be rendered by English *sh*.

*w* is English *v*.

*z* with a dot over it and palatalized *z* are, roughly, like English *z* in *azure*.

me everywhere? Will that sweet, soft voice forever sound faintly, plaintively in my ears? Will that pale, reproachful face be always present to my agitated mind?

I came to this hustling, bustling metropolis. I thought to find forgetfulness here: forgetfulness of her whom I once so dearly loved, but who later on, through no fault of hers, turned my life into gall. Oh, how eagerly I plunged myself into this stormy, all-absorbing American life! I wished to banish her memory from my mind by force. And all things in the new world seemed, as I had hoped, to put an end to the bitter dreams I had dreamed all these long weary years. But then last night, after the usual busy day and evening, I went to bed and dreamed of her again.

And now her image has pursued me the whole day long. Again she has become my constant companion, not leaving my side for a moment. She bids me to the theater of memory, where she played the leading part in a stirring tragedy.

I met her a number of years ago in my student days in the Fatherland. I was spending my vacation at a watering place mostly visited by the Polish aristocracy of Germany on the shores of the Baltic Sea. It was early in the morning, one of those beautiful, sweet summer mornings, with blue skies, soft breezes, and a very tender sun. I was taking an early stroll through the quiet streets of the quaint little town, when a woman's voice, falling upon the morning air, arrested my attention. It came through the open windows of a little cottage on the outskirts of the place, which was almost completely hidden from view by the broad-branched century-old linden trees standing guard in front of it. I stopped under the window, leaning on the low wooden fence which separated the little flower-garden in front of the house from the street, and recognized the Polish national hymn, which the woman was apparently singing to her own accompaniment on the piano. I was chained to the spot. Not only was the music beautiful and the voice captivating, but there was so much feeling in that song, so much soul in that voice, that it touched my heart deeply. It seemed to me that I had never before in my life heard so beautiful and inspiring a voice, such soul-drawing music. The voice was so pure, so clear, so deep, so full of soft caressing tenderness, so strong to comfort, so gentle to soothe. It seemed like one of those harmonies of which musicians tell us they dream but can never chain to earth.

When the singer came to the refrain expressing the undying hope of the Polish people for national unity, I forgot that I was listening to the voice of a mere girl. With my mind's eye I saw

before me the Polish nation crying out in the anguish of her soul that she had not given up her hope of regeneration, and that, though a prey to the brutality of her mightier neighbors, though brought low and trodden under foot by the so-called civilized powers of Europe, her hope to which she had now so tenaciously clung for a century and a half of oppression, war and massacre, of depopulation and disaster, sooner or later would be realized; and once more would she take her place as a nation among nations, respected and honored as in her glorious days of old.

This song was not new to me; I had heard it long before. Years and years ago, when I was still in my little birthplace in the Polish provinces of Prussia, I used to sing it with my Polish playmates. My dear mother died with the words of this hymn on her lips, words which were to her almost as sacred as the Lord's prayer. But years had passed since, and I had meanwhile given up my childhood dreams and ideals. I had severed all connections with my mother's people, among whom I was born; their hopes were no longer shared by me, their future was no longer identical with mine. I came to look upon everything Slavic as sordid. I had left the dark and gloomy walls of the little Polish town behind me, the town where I had first seen the light of day; I had freed myself from the stifling atmosphere of Slavic twilight to enter the brilliant midday light of Germanic civilization.

And now, while listening to this hymn sung with so much pathos, so much feeling, so much soul-stirring power, the old memories of childhood overpowered me, and I gave myself up to the recollections of a long-forgotten past. The thoughts which this song called forth in me had such an influence over me that I leaned against the fence and wept. I, the rationalist, who believed he had suppressed all feeling and divorced himself from his past and the history of the people among whom his cradle stood, cried like a child under the influence of a mere song from the lips of a young girl.

The song came to an end; the sounds died away on the morning air, and I still pressed my handkerchief to my moist eyes and burning cheeks. When I emerged from my reveries and was about to move on I saw a white girlish figure standing behind the narrow gate. My instinct told me that this girl was the owner of the voice which had so deeply stirred my soul but a few minutes ago, and this time, as on so many other occasions in my life, my instinct did not fail me. She must have come out to breathe the morning air, completely ignorant of the strange auditor she had had. I felt like

a naughty schoolboy who had been caught in a mischievous act, and as my way led past her I stopped and blurted forth something like an excuse.

My new acquaintance came tactfully to my rescue and said: "I did not know that I had an audience. Our national song is my morning prayer, just as my nationalism is my religion. If I do not begin the day with this song I am not myself all day long. Have you ever heard the melody before?"

I had recovered in the meanwhile; and after introducing myself I told her what memories this music brought to my mind. Her eyes lit up with a mysterious fire as she listened to the story of my childhood; and when she heard me tell of my mother, over whose memory there shone in my eyes a halo of martyrdom, of her infinite love for her people—a love which by its intensity and fire finally consumed her—the singer offered me her hand, a small marble hand, while tears like pearls gathered in her deep black eyes. It was a mark of deep compassion such as I had never received before.

One of your American authors confesses to have been bewitched by two women's voices in his life, and adds that both these voices belonged to German women. If ever a man did fall in love with a voice, he goes to say, he would find that it was the voice of a German woman, but alas! very frequently, of a homely-looking German woman, as an English actor comments on the American's statement. But this is not true of the Polish women. With them a beautiful voice is almost sure to belong to a beautiful woman. And so if I expected from the voice to see a beautiful girl my expectations were more than realized. Vera Lichnowsky, as she introduced herself to me, was one of those Polish women whose charms the German proverb says are unequalled. In vain would I attempt to portray the majesty of her form, or the grace of her movements. She was rather small of stature, and dark of complexion, like a true daughter of the land of Kasimir. But in elasticity of form and regularity of features she could well pass for a sister of Helen. Her abundance of raven black, glossy silken tresses, her deep, very deep eyes with a light "that never was on sea or land," and her sweet mouth, the triumph of all things divine, lent not a little to the charms of her personality. But the real mystery of her magnetic influence lay, I am quite sure, in her soul. Vera was possessed of a supernatural beauty of soul. This was visible in her eyes, in every one of her movements, but principally in her voice. Its sounds touched my ears like white velvet; and



whenever she opened her mouth, and parted those rosy lips of hers, it seemed to me as if all creation stopped to hang breathlessly upon her words. And even now, after years of endless suffering, the memory of the eloquence of her low musical voice sets my heart to beating; and it runs perfectly wild at the thought of that thrilling laugh of hers—a laugh as of silvery bells.

Vera and I soon became friends. At a summer resort, where every one is bent upon pleasure and eager to make friends, acquaintances quickly turn into friendships, and friendships of yesterday often turn into close attachments to-day. We were often together. Side by side we would stroll through the woods or walk up and down the beach, listening to the strains of music of an orchestra coming from a concert-stand not far away. In bad weather we would spend the afternoons in the reading room or on the verandah of the beautiful hotel which faced the sea, reading and discussing current happenings in the world of politics, with especial reference to their possible bearing upon the Polish question. How impatiently Vera would wait for the arrival of the periodicals of her nationalist party, and how she would reach for them! I have never in my life seen a girl in love wait so impatiently for a message from a far-away sweetheart. She identified herself with her cause to such an extent that she lost all consciousness of her individual self. How frequently did I notice that she read her party organ before she read the letter from home handed to her at the same time. The welfare of her people was nearer to her heart than her own happiness. I doubt whether the thought of her people and its future ever left her for one minute. I remember that once when coming on one of our usual rambles in the vicinity to a small hill all covered with vine terraces the scenery captivated my eyes, and I exultingly exclaimed: "Oh, how beautiful!" No response came from my companion, and when I turned around I noticed tears in her eyes. After a few minutes she said:

"Pardon me, but I cannot share your joy at the sight of these vine-clad hills. My thoughts involuntarily turn to the hills in my native village. They, too, once looked like these, but now only thistles and briars grow there; and those who should cultivate them are toiling in the packing houses of Chicago."

Though outwardly calm and placid Vera was the most passionate woman I have ever known. In ordinary conversation she was as sweet and calm as an angel; but when the subject of Polish nationalism and Polish renaissance was broached, and some one in her presence dared to sneer at the idea of a rejuvenated Poland,

Vera at times reminded me of a prophetess of old. Her eyes, those large, shining orbs, would expand in a most miraculous manner, and would burn with a mysterious fire that terrified every one who came within her reach. Unmindful of her surroundings and defying all forms of conventionality she would burst into a bitter attack on the opponents of a reunited Poland.

It was after such a passionate outburst that she fell back into her chair completely exhausted and cried bitterly. Her disputants had left; there was no one about her but me, her constant companion. My sympathies were most strongly aroused. I could well understand how she felt. She stood all alone in her world of ideas. All the Polish young men at that resort had ceased to be Poles at heart. They had become more or less Germanized. They belonged to the usual run of the Polish young men and women in certain parts of Germany and Austria: indifferent to their past, unsympathetic with their present, and hostile to a possible better future for their people. She had no one at that resort to share her hopes for a glorious future, for a united Poland, for the restoration of the Polish nation.

For several minutes she sat thus, her face in her hands, and her whole body shaking with sobs. Then she turned her eyes upon me, those irresistible eyes of hers, and said:

"I am only a woman; a weak, helpless creature. Of what good can I be to my oppressed brethren? But you, you young men, you could be the true saviors of your persecuted and outlawed people in Russia. But you, whose lot has fallen in better places, have no sympathy with the sufferings of your brothers across the border, your own flesh and blood. You are looking out for your own interests only. You have stifled every national feeling within you. You have no Slavic fiber in you any more. What do you care whether we, your people and mine, are slaving under the Russian knout, cursed, despised, and persecuted; or once more a nation with a language, a culture, a civilization of our own; honored and respected among the nations of Europe, as it was in olden times, before the vultures swooped down upon us and tore us into pieces? Deborah could not save Israel without a Barak. Would to God, I, too, had a Barak. Together we might rescue our people from the claws of their oppressors."

What else could I do? Was I too rash in offering my services in the capacity of that biblical fighter? I was twenty; and Vera had captivated me long ago. I had been her devotee long before this

summons; and now I vowed to devote my life to the cause of which Vera was such an ardent champion.

In one of those sweet, calm, but very dark late summer evenings, while sitting close to the water and listening to the rippling of the waves that washed the sand at our feet, Vera initiated me into the secrets of her activities and outlined the plans of our work. I learned of the existence of a secret revolutionary organization, "La Nouvelle Pologne," which started in Geneva and was rapidly spreading to the other Swiss universities. I was to give up my work at the university and follow Vera on a propaganda tour to Russia. Was I too rash in sacrificing my own future for a phantom? Was I a fool to undertake such a dangerous mission? I knew all too well what awaited me in Russia if I were caught in my propaganda for a free Poland. But here I was given an opportunity to remain in her company, and Vera was dearer to me than my own life. For by that time I loved Vera passionately. I loved her with the love that knows no bounds. And could I help it? I was twenty; and she was so beautiful, so charming, and so good. Of course I could not talk to her of love. She would not listen to me. She had no time and no patience for such follies, she would say. Her people needed her full, unreserved, undivided love, sympathy and help. She must be free to carry on her work of salvation for her down-trodden people. But I did not give up the fight for her love, for I was twenty and sanguine. I hoped that sooner or later she would be able and willing to spare a little affection for me from her boundless love for her people. And why worry about to-morrow if to-day is so beautiful? Was I not constantly in her company? Had we not become almost inseparable? For from the moment I placed myself at the service of her cause, she took upon herself to infuse her love for her people into me. But if she had not been so engrossed in her ideal she would have noticed that the fire burning in my eyes was due to my love for her and not for her people. My passion for her, through constant intercourse, became like a consuming fire threatening to devour me should I give it no vent. Finally, in spite of all promises to the contrary, I did give it vent in such words of passion as only first love is capable of. But again she refused to hear of love. When our work has been crowned with success, and Poland has been resuscitated from the ashes, she said, there would be time enough to think of our individual happiness. And again she made me promise never more to mention or in any way show my love for her until our task had been completed. Then she alone would unseal my lips.

Family affairs did not permit me to leave the country as soon as I had expected, and Vera, who was burning with the desire of entering upon her work in Russia, decided to go ahead and not wait for me. I was to join her in Warsaw as soon as my personal affairs would permit me. Needless to say that I suffered bitterly from our separation; and it also goes without saying that I hurried on my personal affairs with all speed. But it seemed that Heaven decreed against me. I was never to look again upon the face of my adored Vera. My aged father suddenly took ill, and as his only son I could not leave his bedside. He feared that the end of his days had come, and wanted his only son, who was born to him in the evening of his life and on whom he had transferred all his love after the tragic death of his young wife, to close his eyes. Then, one fatal morning, when my father was on the road to recovery, and I had already made all preparations for the journey, I learned that Vera was dead. Her mother, who sent me this sad news, also wrote me that her daughter had often spoken to her of me; and what Vera would never tell me, she confided to her mother—that my love for her was not unreturned. She died bravely, the message ran, for she died a heroic death for her people. While she was alone in the land of the Czar, the revolution of 1905 suddenly broke out; and Vera, filled with the heroic spirit of her ancestors, inspired with the militant spirit of her national heroes and heroines, placed herself at the head of a small band of young men, who believed that the longed-for opportunity to throw off the yoke of their oppressor had finally come, took up arms and fought and fell. Vera fell in the battle for national liberty, and thus sealed her love for her people with her own life's blood.

Dear Reader! pardon me if I do not tell you what happened to me when this news reached me. I hardly know myself. All I can remember is that a terrible fever almost put an end to my life. I was ill for months, and fought a desperate fight for my life; and when against all expectations of father and physician I rose from my sick-bed, I was no longer the same man. I was only the shadow of my former self. Broken in body and spirit I wandered from place to place, and visited all those spots made dear to me through Vera's company. I went to Warsaw, and visited her grave. Here is another blank in my memory. I cannot remember what I did there, and how I got away from Vera's eternal resting-place.

Years have passed since. I have traversed lands and continents, but Vera has always been my phantom companion. She has followed me everywhere. In my thoughts by day, my dreams by night, she



always pursued me. I finally came to America. I hoped to find distraction and forgetfulness here. I expected that the hurried and restless life in the New World would down all thoughts of Vera in my mind. For a short time I thought I had succeeded in banishing her ghost from my memory, but last night, after I had spent a day in hard work and study, she again appeared in my dreams. Again those appealing eyes, that reproachful look, pierced my soul.

O Vera, beloved Vera, wilt thou never give me rest? Wouldst thou have me, on whom thy mantle fell, carry on thy life's mission? Dost thou not see that I am not the same man that sat by thy side, and drank in every inspiring word that passed thy dear lips? How can a man have confidence in the future of a people if he has no more confidence in his own future? How can a man ruined in body and spirit build upon the ruins of a country?

I am no more the man who pledged his life for thy people. That man has gone with thee to the grave. All that has remained of him is a mere shadow, a mere reflection of his former being. Oh, spare me, dear Vera, absolve me from my promise. Only men wishing to live, to live a free life, and not those satisfied to die for the cause, should take up arms to defend their national honor, thou wouldst often say. But I do not wish to live; I cannot live. Death would be to me the greatest blessing. I would then join thee: and together we would fall before the throne of the Almighty and pray for the restoration of thy people.

Oh, forgive me, Vera; say *Absolve te*.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

We are indebted for the illustrations of Polish art and architecture accompanying the editorial article on "The Poles and their Gothic Descent" to the Rev. P. L. Swiatkowski, C.R., of Chicago. The examples of architectural style are reproduced from K. Moklowski's *Sztuka Lodowa w Polsce*, and the altar pieces are taken from the periodical *Free Poland* and from Dr. Stanislaw E. Radzekowski's work on the Zakopianian style of Polish art entitled *Styl Zakopianski*. Zakopane is a large village of about 4500 inhabitants in Galicia and is famous as a health resort for consumptives. It is remarkable that these simple mountain folk should possess a native artistic taste. Everything that they use, says Stanislaw Witkiewicz, one of the prominent members of this school, "is characterized by delicacy of form and ornamentation" (*Styl Zakopianski*, 1904, No. 1). "The characteristic feature of the Zakopianian style," the same artist continues, "is its peculiar method of construction—the distinct evidence of synthesis and the attempt to emphasize it by corresponding orna-